



## PROPHECY AND THE END OF TECHNOLOGY

By Wilfred Hahn



Some years ago in 1989, political scientist Francis Fukuyama published an essay entitled *The End of History*. It had a large impact. He had concluded that democracy and free market capitalism had won the world’s ideological and political economic debates. The correctness of this new human plateau was so self-evident and so widely endorsed, that no more debate or theoretical advancement was possible. Therefore, the end of history.

Of course, Mr. Fukuyama will have been guilty of hyperbole. Although his thesis triggered thought-provoking perspectives, it today is clear that no such common agreement exists (i.e., consider the actions of countries such as Russia, China, Arab nations and others).

We want to use a bit of hyperbole to make another thought-provoking claim: The world could be facing the End of Technology.

What do we mean by this?

There may be no more new major technological innovations that will either enable or change the course of mankind and its beliefs.

Certainly, there can be no doubt that researchers and laboratories will continue in their work. The patent offices of the world will continue to grant them by the hundreds of thousands every year. Our societies will continue to be inundated by innovative and novel new consumer products, services, apps and service platforms. Scientists can be expected to discover new things about the universe and the natural sciences.

However, the key question is this: Will any of these inventions “radically” change humanity in its beliefs, mental health and earthly confidence? To humanists, this question will surely seem

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as blasphemy seen from their religious belief system. How could it not be possible that humanity will continue to advance and evolve ... to perhaps extend the lifespan of human beings to 150 years and more ... to even reach the point of singularity, where human biology is merged with technology and mankind "evolves" to a form that does not even require a physical body.

Others see the developments of new technology as being potentially worrisome. The World Economic Forum, in its recent Global Risks 2015 report, specifically cites emerging biotechnologies as a major risk to be monitored. It says: "Emerging technologies hold great and unprecedented opportunities [...]. A range of currently emerging technologies could have [...] profound implications for mankind's future [...]."

The WEF goes on to say: "The establishment of new fundamental capabilities, as is happening for example with synthetic biology and artificial intelligence, is especially associated with risks that cannot be fully assessed in the laboratory. Once the genie is out of the bottle, the possibility exists of undesirable applications or effects that could not be anticipated at the time of invention. Some of these risks could be existential—that is, endangering the future of human life."

Summing up WEF's perspective, technology could eventually wipe out mankind if there are not sufficient guidelines. In other words, technology

could be the end of mankind. Obviously, humanist philosophers themselves remain divided in their views. Some are optimistic, viewing technology as the enabler of human evolution; others the end of human life on earth. We see here that there is no consensus about the future roles of technology.

However, a Biblical worldview and a literal understanding of prophecy lead us to conclude that we indeed are near the end of any new technologies being required to fulfill the Bible's pre-millennial prophecies. From that point of view, the End of Technology may already be in sight. Just what was the last major technology that needed to be in place?

### What Has Technology Done for You Lately?

Without a doubt, the world has experienced a unique period of technological development over the last 150 to 200 years or so. In this small sliver of time, seen from the cosmological timeline of the earthbound human, an explosion of change took place. No one can deny that a massive acceleration occurred in virtually every field and faculty. Science, technology, as well as the Reformation, were at its root.

However, it is debatable whether the pace of change with respect to foundational new discoveries is beginning to fizzle out. For example, the speed of travel for mankind has not advanced in 5 decades. The combustion engine, which all of a sudden made short work



] of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1, 4).

According to Paul, the world will be typified by people who are centered upon themselves ... pursuing their individual wants. They love themselves uppermost. They therefore will have fallen into a trap. Only God can love us fully and perfectly. People who are lured to the notion that they can love themselves better than God, face unhappiness. No doubt, this trend is linked to the rapid rise of depression—what the World Health Organization has observed to be an epidemic. Sadly, it is seen as a disease, not at all as a spiritual malady.

At the same time that selfishness and narcissism become rampant, the world becomes more bewildering and anxiety-filled. “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:34-35).

So, any technology that serves to enable the “love of self”; and to spread information that leads to the magnification of the “anxieties of life”; and centralizes influence and personal monitoring, therefore, is likely to play a prophecy-enabling role.

### The Selfie and the Smartphone

Our inquiry on this topic (End of Technology) and several recent developments prompt us to again comment on the phenomena of the smartphone and to alert of its significance. Firstly, the accelerating sales trend of these devices has been eye-catching. Secondly, a high profile article published by the *Economist* magazine (“Planet of the Phones,” March 3, 2015) outlines this

incredible boom and ponders its implications. And, thirdly, the value of Apple Corporation, the maker of i-Phones (the best-selling smartphones in the world), has been rapidly appreciating.

Recently, the stock market valued the Apple company at over \$700 billion. Some investment analysts speculate that it is likely to become the first company in history to be valued at more than one trillion (USD). Apple is the most profitable large company in existence on the planet today. Its cash hoard totaled \$178 billion at its recent quarter-end.

Imagine that Apple’s biggest challenge is to figure out what to do with its cash hoard. Its cash holdings amount to greater than 10% of all corporate cash holdings in the U.S., and continue to pile up at the rate of \$50 billion per year.

The advances of technology are usually driven by money. But that is an entirely different topic.

Back to the Smartphone. Many people enjoy its conveniences; few realize its revolutionizing impact. It has proven to be the fastest adopted technology of all time. As the *Economist* puts it, “They have become the fastest-selling gadgets in history.”

### The Last Technology—the Smartphone

In an earlier column series (“12 End-time Fuses Burning Alight”), we ventured the opinion that “[...] technology has at least one more role to play in the prophetic timeline of the world. [...] The most pivotal technological developments over the past several decades, as everyone will know, have been the internet and the personal cell phone. [...] Crucially, these two developments have lately con-



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verged into one leading edge—the smart phone.”

That was the significant development—the merging of the cell phone with a web-enabling interconnection.

Why was this significant? This merging opens the gateway to the ultimate “dotage upon the individual” (the self), though within a centrally controlled, global nexus of connections. The smartphone is a personal device. And thus, it becomes the direct channel between the world and the individual’s personal world. The technology coming into existence allows a mass personalization through a complete monitoring of your needs, likes and identifications.

A technology therefore is in process which will know you personally. It controls the information flow to you, and therefore also has the capability of monopolizing the availability of information.

Quoting the *Economist* article further, “Today about half the adult population owns a smartphone; by 2020, 80% will. Smartphones have also penetrated every

aspect of daily life. The average American is buried in one for over two hours every day. [...] The phone takes the processing power of yesterday’s supercomputers—even the most basic model has access to more number-crunching capacity than NASA had when it put men on the Moon in 1969—and applies it to ordinary human interactions. [...] There are 2 billion people around the world using smartphones that have an internet connection and a touchscreen or something similar as an interface. By the end of the decade that number looks set to double to just over 4 billion.”

### Points to Ponder

The Smartphone is transforming our world. It will have an enormous impact. For example, says the *Economist*: “Teenagers, whose time on phones dwarfs that of their elders, are developing a social life in which face-to-face and digital forms of contact are used interchangeably and often simultaneously.” The younger generation is growing up with an entirely different sense of rela-

relationship. They are becoming self-centered, interconnected islands. Everyone is on a mini-stage of their own to the entire world—the Facebook page or some other social medium.

New studies are revealing other concerns: According to a study conducted by the University of Waterloo,<sup>1</sup> use of new communication technologies such as the Smartphone is causing a loss in thinking skills. Attention spans are becoming shorter and intellectual laziness is being observed.

Quoting from the survey, “[...] involving 660 participants, the researchers examined various measures including cognitive style ranging from intuitive to analytical, plus verbal and numeracy skills. Then they looked at the participants’ smartphone habits. The study, from researchers at the University of Waterloo and published in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior*, suggests that smartphone users who are intuitive thinkers [...] frequently use their device’s search engine rather than their own brainpower. Smartphones allow them to be even lazier than they would otherwise be.” According to Gordon Pennycook, a co-lead of the study, research provides support for an association between heavy smartphone use and lowered intelligence.

The world makes its choices. Mankind can use its technologies for good or bad. However, technology uniquely is a double-edged sword. The conveniences it offers all come with a price ... a vulnerability of some kind. It may be a dependence, a loss of independence and self-reliance, or a rising vulnerability to widening controls and monitoring. Technology (and knowledge of true science, for that matter) always moves forward. Its advances do not reverse.

For the Christian, the progression of science and technology presents additional challenges. While on the one hand, enjoying the conveniences that technologies offer, we must be alert to the increasing vulnerabilities. Here, these also may take the form of temptations. And, we must not lose an attitude of reliance upon God.

In the case of the advance of the world-capturing Smartphone and other technologies, we see the world chooses to become increasingly smug and proud. Worldliness and ungodliness find ever bigger and more effective pulpits and distribution channels. The ‘self’ becomes more venerated ... and destructive. Who can stand firm?

Says the Psalmist: “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm” (Psalm 20:7-8).

The New Testament several times encourages one to stand firm. Paul advises believers, “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love” (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).

The flock is also encouraged that God helps in this task; for, “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

“[...] Stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near” (James 5:8).<sup>(MC)</sup>

ENDNOTE

1 Accessed March 7, 2015:  
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/03/15/0305110546.htm>